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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4767
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHWN/AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PRIORITY 1919
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0622
RUEHG/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN PRIORITY 0864
RUEHKG/AMEMBASSY KINGSTON PRIORITY 2588
RUEHPO/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO PRIORITY 1006
RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE PRIORITY 4246
RUEHSP/AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN PRIORITY 1676
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAAIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCPDOC/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY 1525
RUCOWCV/CUSTOMS CARIBBEAN ATTACHE MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUEAHLC/HQS DHS WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 0113
RUMISTA/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

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STATE FOR WHA, WHA/CAR, WHA/EPSC, INR/IAA; NSC FOR FISK AND FEARS; USSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD; USDOC FOR 4322/ITA/MAC/WH/CARIBBEAN BASIN DIVISION; USDOC FOR 3134/ITA/USFCS/RD/WH; DHS FOR CIS-CARLOS ITURREGUI

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: DOMINICAN ELECTIONS #12: RULING PLD GAINS IN CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS

¶1. (SBU) This is the 12th cable in a series reporting on the Dominican Republic's May 16 congressional and municipal elections:

Ruling PLD Gains in Congressional Elections

Dominican voters went to the polls May 16 to elect 32 senators, 178 representatives, 151 mayors and vice mayors, and 963 city council members and their substitutes. Only 12 years after the last fraudulent election, the Dominican Republic is still a fragile democracy -- but the voters' positive demeanor and enthusiastic participation was an important step in fortifying democracy here. Roughly 50% of the 5.4 million registered voters turned out. The election was well organized, relatively smooth, and showed that the electoral process is becoming more reliable. Despite the public's disenchantment with a perceived failure of politics to deliver good governance, the turnout -- typical of past mid-term elections -- shows the Dominican people's continuing faith in electoral democracy.

The election police chief, in comments to Embassy the afternoon of May 17, characterized the situation throughout the country as "calm and under control." There had been one violent confrontation between groups of party activists near the capital, which left two persons dead and one injured. A civic group reported another person killed in a separate incident, also in the Santo Domingo area. The chief said tension was continuing in some communities where the vote had been close and party militants were striving for advantage in the count.

The ruling PLD did very well in the congressional elections. Partial returns released May 17 show the PLD and its allies winning in 16 of the 32 provinces and leading narrowly in 5 others. The PLD won the symbolically important mayoral and

senatorial races in the capital and the senate seat from the northern regional center, Santiago. An unprecedented alliance between the main opposition PRD and PRSC apparently failed to sustain the opposition's control of Congress. A senior PRSC legislator, who was re-elected, told political officer, "The alliance lost."

The slowness of the Central Elections Board (JCE) in releasing returns has been due to the complexity of these elections and the cumbersome but effective safeguards built into the system of paper balloting and manual tabulation and verification of returns before they are entered into the JCE computer system. Official election results for the lower house of Congress or municipal offices are not yet available.

The most accurate available election figures are from the main cities, based on a quick count by USAID-supported NGO Participacion Ciudadana.

In the National District (Santo Domingo), based on 99% of the quick count sample:

Congressional: PLD and allies, 56.5 %; PRD/PRSC and allies, 39.0 %

Municipal: PLD and allies, 57.8 %, PRD/PRSC and allies, 40.0 %

In Santiago, based on 91% of the quick count sample:

Congressional: PLD and allies, 53.1%; PRD/PRSC and allies, 44.8%

Municipal: PLD and allies, 39.0%; PRD/PRC and allies, 57.2% (a popular PRSC mayor won reelection to a third term)

A clear PLD victory, once returns are complete, will be viewed as a good indication of current President Fernandez's chances to win a new term as president in 2008. He has been an effective, moderate president who has stood up to Venezuelan President Chvez.

The biggest change will occur in the Senate: PLD members will shoot up from 1 of 32 now to a large plurality or a majority.

Results for the lower house, where voters could express a preference for individual candidates on a party list, are less clear, but the PLD will pick up strength. Overall, this outcome is likely to give President Fernandez more leverage in getting bills through Congress, with less delay on measures of interest to the United States.

We expect Dominican Attorney General Francisco Dominguez Brito, a close contact of the Embassy, to be elected senator representing Santiago. He has been an outstanding attorney general, promoting rule of law and serious enforcement. He would be a strong voice for a modernizing and effective Dominican Senate. We do not yet know who would replace him as attorney general.

12. (U) Drafted by Bainbridge Cowell.

13. (U) This piece and others in our series can be consulted at our SIPRNET web site (<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/santodomingo>) along with extensive other material.

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